

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-07 AID-05 CEA-01

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INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

AMCONSUL MUNCIH

USMISSIN NATO

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ENRG, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET OIL TRANSPORT

1. TASS VESTNIK OF JULY 18 REPORTS THAT RAIL TRANSPORT OF SOVIET CRUDE OIL WILL BE MINIMIZED DURING 1977-80. CRUDE CARRIED IN TANK CARS IN 1980 WILL AMOUNT TO 50 MILLION TONS, ROUGHLY 8 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL 650 MILLION TONS OF CRUDE TO BE MOVED THAT YEAR. THE OTHER 600 MILLION TONS WILL MOVE VIA PIPELINES--OF WHICH SEVERAL ARE CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION. IN 1975, 458 MILLION TONS OF CRUDE WERE TRANSPORTED BY PIPELINE.

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2. TASS SAYS THAT THE 50-MILLION-TON FIGURE REPRESENTS AN 8-MILLION-TON REDUCTION IN RAIL TRANSPORT (COMMENT: PRESUMABLY A REDUCTION FROM CURRENT TRENDS). THE GOAL IS TO REDUCE THE OIL TRANSPORT BURDEN ON SOVIET RAILWAYS. ALTHOUGH MOVING CRUDE FROM WEST SIBERIA TO THE SOVIET FAR EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA IS MORE ECONOMICAL VIA RAIL THAN BY PIPELINE, SAYS TASS, NEW TRUNKLINES ARE NEEDED TO FREE UP TRANSPORT CAPACITY ON SUCH CENTRAL RAIL

LINES AS THE KUIBYSHEV RAILROAD. CONSTRUCTION OF 17,600 KM OF OIL PIPELINES IN 1976-80 WILL CUT 1980 RAILWAY OIL TRAFFIC BY 30 MILLION TON-KILOMETERS AT A SAVINGS OF 82 MILLION RUBLES.

3. COMMENT. THE REASONING BEHIND LABELING THE 1980 ABSOLUTE RAIL TONNAGE AS A REDUCTION IS NOT READILY APPARENT. IF MOST OF THE 1975 CRUDE (491 MILLION TONS) OUTPUT NOT TRANSPORTED BY PIPELINE WAS HANDLED BY RAIL, THE LATTER'S BURDEN WOULD HAVE BEEN ROUGHLY 30 MILLION TONS. IN 1980 IT WILL RISE TO 50 MILLION. BASED ON THE TASS FIGURES, THE PERCENTAGE OF OIL MOVED BY RAIL WILL ACTUALLY INCREASE DURING 1976-80. TOON

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